

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 4, 9-12, 15, and 20-24 are pending.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1 and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Kato (U.S. Patent No. 6,403,927); and Claims 2-11 and 13-20 were objected to, but indicated as including allowable subject matter.

Initially, it is noted that the present application was filed with a PCT Article 34 Amendment. Additionally, it is noted that an English translation of the Article 34 Amendment was filed with the present application such that the pages of the English translation could be substituted for the corresponding pages of the claims of the international application without leaving an inconsistency. See M.P.E.P. § 1893.01(a)(3). Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the Article 34 Amendment should have been entered and the claims therein treated on the merits.

In response to the indication of allowable subject matter in the outstanding Office Action, it is noted that independent Claim 1 from the Article 34 Amendment contains features similar to those recited in allowable Claims 2 and 3 of the original claims. Additionally, independent Claims 4, 12, and 15 from the Article 34 Amendment also contain subject matter similar to that recited in the claims that were indicated as allowable in the outstanding Office Action. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that independent Claims 1, 4, 12, and 15, and all claims dependent thereon, be allowed.

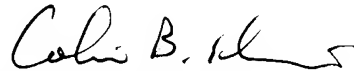
In response to the rejection of Claims 1 and 12 in the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that this rejection is moot in view of the above discussion.

Consequently, in view of the above discussion, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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